

Hello Latin America & Canada!

Check out *your* website at: <http://tricare15.army.mil>



- Another Successful Region 15 Spring 2002 Conference!
- Checkout This Great TRICARE Information Website –
<http://www.tricare.osd.mil/media/default.cfm>
- **Military Services Provide Health & Wellness Websites** *(I gotta get this stuff from somewhere!)*
- **New! Auth. for Disclosure of Information Form Req'd for Out-of Country Med Appts!**
- **International SOS Changing Long Distance Carriers . . . Stand By!**

POCs: Remember To Send A Copy Of Orders With ALL New Enrollment Requests!

TRICARE Region 15 Spring 2002 Conference

The Region 15 Spring 2002 Remote Latin America Conference was a fantastic success! For those of you who attended, we appreciate your input and participation. For those who were unable to attend, we hope to see you next year! Stand by for next year's location information. We're working on some creative planning that will be both convenient and cost effective.

Due to the maturity of our region and TRICARE services downrange we realized fewer questions this year than before. The questions asked that required further research are listed on the attached TLAC Action Items List and the TLAC Information Items list.

The conference presentations are available on the TLAC website at
<http://tricare15.army.mil/POC%20Conference/confpresent15.htm>

Authorization for Disclosure of Information

Immediately, all Prime beneficiaries who travel Out-Of-Country for Medical TDYs must complete and sign a DA Form 5006-R (Authorization for Disclosure of Information). Attached you'll find a letter to the POCs describing the policy, a letter to the providers as explanation, a blank DA Form 5006-R, and a new page for your POC Guide Book.

Call us if you have any questions!

From International SOS

International SOS is changing their long distance carriers. Their toll free number will not change, however, the access codes to connect to toll free long distance from Latin America will change. Stay tuned for more information. If you have any difficulty in reaching the Call Center via the toll free line, contact them via the call collect number or their 24/7 email address at

phlopsmed@internationalsos.com

Health & Wellness Information Websites

Did you know? The medical departments of each of the military services provide their beneficiaries with comprehensive medical information on the Internet.

Virtual Naval Hospital <http://www.vnh.org/Patients.html>

Navy's Lifelines <http://www.lifelines2000.org/services/medical/index.asp>

Hooah 4 Health <http://www.hooah4health.com/>

Crossroads <http://www.afcrossroads.com/medical/index.cfm>

Center of Excellence for Medical Multimedia at <http://cemm.org/index.asp>

WPS has new phone numbers for the beneficiary lines in Customer Service for TRICARE Overseas: 608.301.2310 replaces 224 2727, and, 608.301.2311 replaces 224 2728

Test Your Supplement Savvy

Advertised throughout the media, displayed in grocery stores and pharmacies, and promoted widely on the Internet, dietary supplements look like just another consumer product on the shelf. But are they? Take this quiz to find out how much you know about using dietary supplements safely.

1. A supplement labeled "natural" means that it also is:
 - a. mild
 - b. without any risk of side effects
 - c. safe to use with other medications
 - d. none of the above
2. Since dietary supplements are so easily available - and don't require a doctor's prescription - they are much safer than drug products and can be used to self-treat illnesses without a health professional's advice or supervision.

True or False
3. Testimonials in dietary supplement promotions give a good idea of the supplement's benefits and safety because they're based on firsthand accounts.

True or False
4. Many supplements have proven health benefits.

True or False
5. Before you start taking a dietary supplement, talk it over with a knowledgeable person like:
 - a. your doctor or health professional
 - b. your pharmacist
 - c. a supplement salesperson
 - d. a friend who takes them

Answers

1. **D.** The term "natural" may suggest to consumers that the supplement is safe, especially when compared with prescription drugs that are known to have side effects. But natural is not necessarily safe. Although many supplements can be used safely by most people, other supplements, including some herbal products, can be dangerous. Aristolochic acid, which has been found in some traditional Chinese herbal remedies, has been linked to severe kidney disease. And the herb comfrey contains certain alkaloids that, when ingested, have been linked to serious, even fatal, liver damage. Animal studies suggest that the herb may cause cancer, too. Even certain vitamins can be toxic at high doses. And certain supplements have been found to interact with other medications in ways that could cause injury.
2. **False.** Studies have shown that some herbal products interact with drugs and can have a wide range of effects. For example, St. John's Wort can lower the effects of indinavir, a protease inhibitor for treating HIV. St. John's Wort also may interfere with drugs used by organ transplant patients and drugs used to treat depression, seizures and certain cancers. In addition, there are concerns that it may reduce the effectiveness of oral contraceptives. Garlic, ginkgo, danshen and dong quai can cause blood to thin, which could cause serious problems for people on drugs like warfarin or aspirin. Dietary supplements are not required to go through the same pre-market government review for quality, safety and efficacy as drug products. But that doesn't mean they should be taken lightly - or without consulting your health care professional, especially if you have a medical condition or are taking other drugs.
3. **False.** It's unwise to judge a product's efficacy or safety based only on testimonials. First, it is very difficult to verify the accuracy of the account: Some marketers may embellish or even make up testimonials to sell their product. Second, you can't generalize one person's experience to others. Anecdotes are not a substitute for valid science.
4. **True.** Studies suggest that several popular supplements, including herbal products, may provide health benefits. For example, calcium can reduce the risk of osteoporosis, folic acid during pregnancy can prevent birth defects, and there is some evidence suggesting that St. John's Wort may be helpful for some people with mild depression. Check out any health claims with a reliable source, such as the National Institutes of Health's Office of Dietary Supplements, a public health or scientific organization like the American Cancer Society or the Arthritis Foundation, and your health provider.
5. **A or B.** Talk to your doctor, pharmacist or other health provider about any medicines you take, as well as any dietary supplements you're using or thinking about using. Though some doctors have limited knowledge of herbal products and other supplements, they have access to the most current research and can help monitor your condition to ensure that no problems develop or serious interactions occur. Retailers or marketers can be good sources of information about their products and their ingredients, but bear in mind that they have a financial interest in their products. If your doctor or pharmacist has a financial interest in the product, get a second, independent opinion.
For more information about the safe use of dietary supplements, visit the FTC's Virtual Health Treatments page at www.ftc.gov/healthclaims.